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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

21 September 1959

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Possible Developments in Iraq*

1. The situation in Iraq has grown even more uncertain since our last estimate (SNIE 36.2/2-59, "The Short Term Outlook for Iraq," dated 30 June 1959). Qassim has continued certain moves to limit Communist activities but these measures have been overshadowed by his failure as yet to move against the Communists for their part in the Kirkuk atrocities of mid-July and his public approval of pro-Communist Col. Mahdawi's anti-nationalist activities in the notorious People's Court. Yesterday's execution of Brigadier Tabaqchali and other participants in the Mosul uprising, as well as four civilian members of Nuri's last government, is the most drastic action along these lines.

2. Predictions as to future developments must remain highly tentative. Qassim has not yet developed an organization personally loyal to him. He probably still hopes to maintain the precarious

* This memorandum has been discussed with CCI and DD/P.

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equilibrium he thinks he has established between Communist and anti-Communist forces. He may be able to do so, possibly by counterbalancing the Tabaqchali execution with new moves to cut down Communist power. However, we believe that the odds favor another important round in the near future in the struggle for control of Iraq. The execution of Tabaqchali could easily serve as a catalyst for action in the tense situation. Such a round would not necessarily prove decisive, but it would probably involve more extensive disturbances and reprisals than have yet taken place.

3. Reports of coup plots have increased in recent weeks. Iraqi nationalists' disillusionment with Qassim is at a new peak and the UAR apparently is beginning to fear increasingly that Qassim cannot be relied upon after all to keep Iraq out of Communist hands. Nasser has claimed to oppose any new coup move at this time on the grounds that it would probably abort, but the UAR may willy-nilly find itself involved in a nationalist rising.

4. Qassim and the Communists are both almost certainly aware of the nationalists' desperation. Either or both may move to forestall a nationalist challenge, though we believe that the Communists would still hope to act in conjunction with Qassim. If the nationalists, either alone or with such UAR support as can be mobilized, do manage

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to kick off a coup, the outcome will be uncertain. On the basis of our limited knowledge, we believe that at best its chances of success would be no better than even at this time. On the whole, present trends point toward a further weakening of anti-Communist ranks in Iraq with a consequent resurgence of Communist power.

5. This in turn would probably lead to more acute and more overt hostility between Iraq and the UAR and increased turmoil in the Arab world and the Middle East generally. In such circumstances, both the West and the Communist Bloc would be likely to find themselves under pressure to play a more active role in the situation than has been the case during the past few months.

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